

for programs which most directly affect the poorest countries in the world—cuts which disproportionately affect African and Latin American countries. Further, the bill drastically cuts funding for international financial institutions that provide developmental loans to poor countries. This legislation also cuts funding designated for international HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and codifies the “Mexico City” restrictions on international family planning funding.

I am pleased, however, that the House approved two amendments to address some of the funding problems and helps to make this bill better. I strongly supported the amendment offered by my colleague, Ms. Waters, to increase funding for the HIPC Trust Fund at a level equal to the President’s request. It is a critical victory that the Waters amendment was approved, because passage of the debt relief provisions in the underlying bill represent an unacceptable amount.

As approved by the House Appropriations Committee, H.R. 4811 provides \$82 million, or only 16 percent of the President’s request for debt relief for some of the poorest countries of the world. As a member of the House Banking Committee, I am disappointed that the Leadership did not make more of a commitment to debt relief, especially in light of the accomplishments of my colleague and Chairman of the Banking Committee, JIM LEACH. Last year, with his strong leadership, the Banking Committee approved H.R. 1095, legislation which took an important step in relieving some of the debt loads carried by the world’s most economically distressed nations. While some of the most important provisions of H.R. 1095 were realized last year, the FY2001 Administration request is desperately needed to expand the debt relief effort. If the Waters amendment had not been approved, the low level of funding including in this bill would have jeopardized the HIPC initiative because it may have led other bilateral donors to reduce their contributions. I am pleased with the passage of the Waters amendment, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that meaningful debt relief can be achieved by the world’s most impoverished nations.

I also strongly supported passage of the Lee amendment to increase funds for international efforts to address the global HIV/AIDS crisis. The recent 13th International AIDS Conference in South Africa highlighted the fact that the epidemic in the rest of the world is threatening to bring down entire nations. In many of the countries throughout the world it has crippled the entire infrastructures; education, economic, and national security. It is critical that we invest our resources in an effort to turn back the tide. Regrettably, the Foreign Operations funding bill would have cut the President’s request for funding the fight against the global AIDS crisis by almost 20 percent. This cut would have been devastating, especially so at a time when HIV/AIDS poses a serious threat to the stability of lesser developed nations around the world particularly in Africa. In sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of adults who have been in-

fectured with HIV is 20 percent or higher. With today’s passage of the Lee amendment, I am hopeful that funds to fight the global AIDS pandemic can begin to make a difference and save thousands of lives throughout the world.

While I have strong reservations about the underlying bill, I am pleased with \$2.9 billion in U.S. aid provided to Israel. U.S. aid to Israel is one of America’s most cost-effective foreign policy investments. The economic and military aid that America provides Israel serves the interests of both countries by promoting peace, security, and trade. Aid to Israel is an essential and efficient means of strengthening the Middle East’s only democracy. Israel stands out as the only steadfast ally that supports U.S. foreign policy and military actions and votes with the U.S. and the U.N. more than any other country. Aid to Israel supports American diplomatic efforts in promoting a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The continuity of U.S. aid sends a powerful signal to potential adversaries that a negotiated settlement with Israel is the only option since the U.S. commitment to Israel is unwavering.

For my state of Texas, exports to Israel are particularly important. Israel has become a world leader in high-technology, agriculture, medicine and education. Realizing the great potential for trade and cooperation with Israel in these and many other fields, several states, including Texas, have established joint exchange programs with Israel. Since 1984, when Texas became the first state to set up and promote bilateral trade and technological cooperation, more than 20 states have followed suit. These agreements have resulted in the opening up of trade offices in Israel, creating new jobs and opportunities for the people of Texas and Israel.

Virtually all U.S. aid to Israel—economic and military—helps Israel meet its security needs. As other countries in the region enlarge and modernize their arsenals, this assistance gives Israel the means to obtain expensive, advanced American weaponry that it needs to defend itself. U.S. aid reduces the risk of war in the Middle East by sustaining Israel’s qualitative military advantage over the combined military forces of its adversaries who have an overwhelming numerical advantage. By keeping Israel’s army second to none in the region, this direct aid deters aggressors from attacking Israel without an American military presence, which Israel has never sought.

The U.S. aid package contained in the FY2001 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill is especially critical to Israel this year. As Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak prepares to meet with President Clinton and Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat at Camp David this week to discuss final status issues, U.S. support for Israel and her security needs becomes more critical than ever.

As the Camp David peace summit is ongoing, I think it is appropriate to applaud the courage of the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who has withstood a very difficult term in office. In recent weeks, three of his coalition members have broken away or resigned because of his efforts to seek a lasting peace

agreement. Even at this time of internal political tension in Israel, it is clear that Prime Minister Barak traveled to Camp David with a profound sense of responsibility. He understands that he has a mandate from the voters, the citizens of Israel to do all that he can to establish peace, not for just for those who would benefit now, but for the children and for those not yet born. I am hopeful that Mr. Barak and PLO Chairman Arafat can find a way to address the critical issues with a respect for all sides that can result in a true, lasting peace for the Middle East.

Mr. Chairman, I understand that foreign assistance, which represents less than 1 percent of the entire federal budget, is often politically unpopular. However, at a time when the United States, having won both the cold war and the economic war, reigns supreme as the sole economic and military superpower and the leader of the free world, it has become incumbent upon us to take a leadership role in pursuing peace and prosperity for the less fortunate in the world. Further, I believe it is in our own best interest to lead the other free and democratic nations of the world in combating poverty and disease—which ravages many parts of the less developed world—and poses a significant future threat to stability. With that in mind, I hope—as the appropriations process moves forward—that the defects in the underlying bill can be corrected.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Chairman, on July 13, 2000, the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, H.R. 4811, came to the House floor for a vote. I reluctantly vote for this bill for the sole reason of moving the foreign affairs platform forward.

I believe H.R. 4811 is a bad bill for various reasons. It appropriates a total of \$13.3 billion for fiscal year 2001—\$1.9 billion or 12% below the Administration’s request and \$451 million less than the fiscal year 2000 funding level. This bill makes large cuts in funding for programs which most directly affect the poorest countries in the world—cuts that disproportionately affect African and Latin American countries—and contains only \$82 million of the \$472 million request for multilateral debt relief assistance. Further, the bill drastically cuts international financial institution funding that provides interest-free loans to poor countries. H.R. 4811 cuts \$42 million from international HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, a cut I find deplorable.

Although this bill is badly flawed in many ways, I believe the best way to address those problems is to move it forward and express my concerns directly to the conferees. If the bill is reported out of conference with my concerns left unaddressed, I will support the President’s veto.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Chairman, as Chairman of both the Helsinki Commission and the House International Relations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and Human Rights, I am particularly supportive of many portions of this Foreign Operations bill for Fiscal Year 2001. The section on “Assistance to Eastern Europe and the Baltic States” is one